Choose the right tracking method for your project

So far, you've learned about the importance of tracking project progress. You've also reviewed some of the different tracking methods used by project managers, like project plans, Gantt and Burndown charts, and Roadmaps. This reading will explore and compare these popular tracking methods in more detail so you can feel more confident choosing the best method for your projects.

Gantt charts

The Gantt chart is one of the most popular tracking methods and can be used for all types of projects. Gantt charts typically live in your project charter and are updated as the project progresses.

Gantt charts are useful for:

- Helping a team stay on schedule
- Projects with lots of tasks, dependencies, and milestones
- Projects with large teams, because ownership and responsibilities are explicitly laid out visually

Asana, one of the work management software tools featured in this certification, has useful resources for getting started with Gantt charts. Practice working with Gantt charts on your own with a free Asana trial ↗ or by downloading a free Gantt chart template from Google Sheets ↗ or Microsoft Excel ↗.

Want to learn more? Check out these resources:
Asana help article: New to Gantt charts? Start here. ↗

Roadmaps

Roadmaps are another common tracking method. Like Gantt charts, Roadmaps also track both individual and project progress toward milestones. However, Roadmaps are best suited for tracking big milestones in your project.

Roadmaps are useful for:

- High-level tracking of large milestones. Roadmaps outline the project as a whole and provide an overall snapshot of key points—just like an actual roadmap contains points of interest and mile markers.
- Illustrating to your team or key stakeholders how a project should evolve over time

Roadmaps can be built using different tools. You can create a Roadmap in a document (like this example ↗).

Smartsheet has useful resources for getting started with Roadmaps. Practice working with Roadmaps on your own with a free Smartsheet trial ↗ or by downloading this Roadmap template ↗ created with Google Sheets.

Want to learn more? Check out these resources:
Smartsheet help article: Everything you need to know about Project Roadmaps ↗
Free Product Roadmap templates from Smartsheet ↗

Burndown charts

Burndown charts are typically used by Agile Scrum teams. Burndown charts reveal how quickly your team is working by displaying how much work is left and how much time remains to complete the work. The main uses of a Burndown chart are to keep the project team on top of targeted completion dates and make them aware of scope creep if it occurs. The chart should be displayed so everyone can see it and needs to be updated regularly in order to be effective.

Burndown charts are useful for:

- Projects that require a detailed review of tasks
- Projects where finishing on time is the top priority

*Note: If you'd like to learn about Agile and Scrum, which are popular project management approaches, check out Course 5 of this certificate, Agile Project Management ↗.

A Burndown chart helps you, as a project manager, understand how your team works and what influences their ability to complete tasks on time. This way, you can address issues right away, before they become major problems. They also help you plan more efficiently for the next project by identifying potential problem areas.

Jira is a work management software tool that has useful resources for getting started with Burndown charts. Practice working with Burndown charts on your own with a free Jira trial ↗ or by downloading this Burndown chart template ↗ created with Google Sheets.

Want to learn more? Check out these resources:
Jira help article: Learn how to use burndown charts in Jira software ↗
ProjectManager.com article: Burndown Chart: What Is It & How Do I Use It? ↗

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